

EDITORIAL

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Have you been introduced as a real live missionary? It's not self doubt about 'real' or 'live' that is disturbing. It's the 'missionary' part. Can an existing pervasive, inappropriate stereo-typing compel you too, to mount an emotive challenge to those 'possible' perceptions?

Moser (January 21, 2014, cited in Dilley, 2014) offered a comment, including a description of opinions learnt, "we were taught that the Protestant missionaries had a negative influence on the countries where they served, spreading paternalism, patriarchy, subservience of women, and that they [missionaries] were in cahoots with the colonizers." Some additional arguments, based on nationalistic (Akha, 1991) or anthropological premises, discredit missionaries claiming negative disruption of both culture and community. On a more specific, but broader front, the "Anti-missionaries" movement of Judaism challenges Messianic belief in Yeshua. Both consequent and subsequently, anti-Anti-missionary ministries have arisen (HaDavar, n.d.).

Dilly (2014) reports on sociologist Robert Woodberry's research that, rather than providing an adversarial defense, shares a pro-missionary evaluation. This work is personally affirming within multiple generation 'missionary' families and needs wider acknowledgement in both our church and secular communities.

Woodberry (cited in Dilley, 2014) has asserted that:

Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations (para. 24).

Choose any location where "conversionary Protestant" missionaries worked and you will usually find a better supply of educational resources. In addition, many of the early nationalists in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia were graduates of Protestant mission schools (Dilley, 2014, para 42).

We don't have to deny there were and are missionaries who do self-centered things. But if that were the average effect, we would expect the places where missionaries had influence to be worse than places where missionaries weren't allowed or were restricted in action. We find exactly the opposite on all kinds of outcomes.

Even in places where few people converted, [missionaries] had a profound economic and political impact (para. 39). Daniel Philpott, a lecturer in political

science and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame (cited in Dilley, 2014) states:

For [Woodberry] to show through devastatingly thorough analysis that conversionary Protestants are crucial to what makes the country democratic today [is] remarkable in many ways. Not only is it another factor—it turns out to be the most important factor. It can't be anything but startling for scholars of democracy. (para. 28)

Dilley (1991, para. 42) states "... over a dozen studies have confirmed Woodberry's findings. The growing body of research is beginning to change the way scholars, aid workers, and economists think about democracy and development."

Since all Christian educators share the gospel (com) mission, every classroom is a mission field, sometimes a 'foreign' mission field. In the same way as Woodfield claims these outcomes for distant land appointments, just as significant achievements are continuously accomplished in establishing the democracy of 'homeland' social interaction.

But, "Woodberry would [caution and] temper our triumphalism, ... reminding us that all these positive outcomes were somewhat unintended, a sign of God's greater purposes being worked out through the lives of devoted but imperfect people." (Dilley 2014, para. 44).

Imperfect missionaries - your commitment and achievement is acknowledged and praised. **TEACH**

References

- Dilley, A. P. [posted 1/8/2014 12:07PM] The surprising discovery about those colonialist, proselytizing missionaries. *Christianity Today* (January/February), Retrieved from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/january-february/world-missionaries-made.html>
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